

Message Text

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJ: SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS

1. SUMMARY. FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) HELD ITS NATIONAL CONGRESS IN GRENOBLE JUNE 22-24. CONGRESS WAS A GREAT PERSONAL SUCCESS FOR FIRST SECRETARY FRANCOIS MITTERAND WHO CONSOLIDATED HIS CONTROL OVER THE PARTY, ENHANCED HIS IMAGE AS STATESMAN RATHER THAN SIMPLY POLITICAN, AND STRENGTHENED HIS POSITION AS EVENTUAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. WHILE CONGRESS DID NOT RESOLVE ALL FACTIONAL AND POLICY DISPUTES WITHIN PARTY, THE PS TODAY IS MORE UNITED AND MORE CONFIDENT THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE THE EARLY POST- WAR YEARS. SHORT- TERM PARTY STRATEGY ENDORSED BY CONFERENCE SUPPORTS

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CONTINUATION OF LOOSE, TACTICAL ALLIANCE WITH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) PLUS ALL- OUT DRIVE TO MAKE PS DOMINANT PARTY OF THE LEFT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE GRNOBLE CONGRESS WAS A MAJOR POLITICAL TRIUMPH FOR MITTERAND. HIS PRINCIPAL SPEECH, AN EXTEMPORANEOUS TWO- HOUR EFFORT, WAS A BRILLIANT, CONVINCING EXAMPLE OF ORATORY AND POLITICAL MASTERY. IF THERE REMAINED DOUBTS IN ANYONE'S MIND PRIOR TO THE CONGRESS ABOUT MITTERAND'S PRESIDENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS OR ASPIRATIONS, THEY WERE DISSIPATED BY HIS GRENOBLE PERFORMANCE. THERE WAS CORRIDOR TALK AT THE CONGRESS OF MITTERAND'S STEPPING DOWN AS FIRST SECRETARY WITHIN TWO YEARS TO BECOME A " NATIONAL FIGURE" IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1976 PRESIDENTIAL RACE.

3. MITTERAND'S CONTROL OVER THE PARTY APPARATUS WAS STRENGTHENED BY THE CONGRESS' OUTCOME. THE " PARTY PLATFORM" RESOLUTION SPONSORED BY HIS SUPPORTERS WON 65 PER CENT OF THE DELEGATES' VOTE, UP FROM THE BARE MAJORITY WITH WHICH THE MITTERAND RESOLUTION CARRIED AT THE 1971 CONGRESS. FACTIONS AND POLICY DIFFERENCES NONETHELESS REMAIN. THE MOST IMPORTANT MINORITY GROUP, CERES (A GROUP OF FAR- LEFT, MARXIST BUT NON- COMMUNIST YOUNG TURKS LED BY JEAN- PIERRE CHEVENEMENT) WON SOME 20 PER CENT OF THE VOTE FOR THEIR DRAFT PARTY PLATFORM RESOLUTION. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS WITHIN THE PARTY FOR INCREASED WORKER MANAGEMENT OF INDUSTRY, GREATER SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AND IMMIGRANT WORKERS, A MORE PACIFIST DEFENSE POSTURE AND A MORE " SOCIALIST" ORGANIZATION OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES. THEY WILL, IN SHORT, TRY TO ORIENT THE PARTY MORE TOWARDS THE NEW STYLE LEFT POLITICS CERES FAVORS.

4. MITTERAND HANDLED THE CERES FACTION FAIRLY BUT FIRMLY AT THE CONGRESS. HE GAVE CERES LEADERS A VOICE IN THE PROCEEDINGS AND REPRESENTATION IN PARTY COUNCILS COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR STRENGTH BUT FIRMLY SQUASHED THEIR EFFORTS TO STAMPEDE THE PARTY TOWARDS FAR- LEFT POSITIONS. CERES IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY AS A SOURCE OF NEW, YOUNG BLOOD, EXPECIALLY OF MILITANT- PARTY WORKERS, AND AS A LIGHTNING ROD TO DEFLECT ACCUSATIONS THAT THE PS IS BECOMING SIMPLY ANOTHER BOURGEOIS, IF LEFT- OF- CENTER, PARTY. THE PROBLEM FOR MITTERAND OVER THE

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NEXT FEW YEARS WILL BE TO KEEP THE CERES GROUP WITHIN THE PARTY WHILE BROADENING HIS PERSONAL BASE OF SUPPORT TOWARDS THE CENTER; THE LATTER AN ESSENTIAL MOVE IF MITTERAND IS EVER TO MAKE A SERIOUS BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

4. OTHER FACTIONS WITHIN THE PARTY, SUCH AS THAT OF GUY MOLLET,

HAVE BEEN WEAKENED TO THE POINT OF BEING TOTALLY UNABLE TO
CHALLENGE
MITTERAND'S LEADERSHIP . HE THUS EMERGES FROM THE CONGRESS
AS THE UNCONTESTED LEADER OF THE PS AND AS THE FOREMOST SPOKES-
MAN FOR THE ENTIRE LEFT IN FRANCE, CONTINUING TO STRENGTHEN
A POSITION HE BUILT UP DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

5. PRESS COMMENT HAS FOCUSED ON THE EFFORTLESS MASTERY OF THE
PS WHICH MITTERAND DISPLAYED. SEVERAL OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED
THAT MITTERAND AND THE NEW SOCIALIST PARTY IN EFFECT HAVE NOTED
THAT MITTERAND AND THE NEW SOCIALIST PARTY IN EFFECT ARE
CHALLENGING THE VALIDITY OF ANDRE MALRAUX'S GLOOMY CONTENTION
THAT BETWEEN US (THE GAULLISTS) AND THE COMMUNISTS THERE
IS NOTHING. INDEED, UDR ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ALEXANDRE SANGUINETTI,
ANNOUNCED IN A RECENT PUBLIC SPEECH THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY
HAS BECOME THE UDR'S REAL
COMPETITION. THE PCF HAS EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE
CONGRESS' PLEDGE OF CONTINUED FIDELITY TO THE UNITED LEFT
PROGRAM BUT THE COMMUNISTS ARE CLEARLY WORRIED ABOUT SOCIALIST
EFFORTS TO EXPAND THEIR CONSTITUENCY AT COMMUNIST EXPENSE.

6. COMMENT: THE SOCIALIST UNDER MITTERAND'S LEADERSHIP HAVE
CONSOLIDATED A POSITION AS ONE OF THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL
PARTIES IN FRANCE, ALONG WITH THE UDR AND THE COMMUNISTS.
BUT THE PARTY'S SUCCESS IN THE ELECTIONS AND NEW- FOUND
DYNAMISM ARE ALMOST ENTIRELY DUE TO MITTERAND'S LEADERSHIP.
THE PARTY'S ORGANIZATION AND COHESIVENESS REMAIN FRAGILE
AND ITS LEADERSHIP COUNTS NO FIRST- RANK FIGURES
OF NATIONAL PROMINENCE EXCEPT MITTERAND. IT HAS, IN FACT,
BECOME A ONE- MAN SHOW, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH MANY ONCE- TIME
SOCIALISTS DEPLORE, AND THERE IS SERIOUS QUESTION AS TO WHETHER
ITS SIZE AND INCREASING INFLUENCE COULD BE SUSTAINED IN MITTERAND'S
ABSENCE. THE BEST HOPE FOR THE PARTY, IF IT HOPES TO MOUNT
A SERIOUS, NON- COMMUNIST BUT LEFT- WING CHALLENGE TO THE
GOVERNMENT, IS THAT MITTERAND'S PERSONAL CHARISMA CAN BE
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AUGMENTED BY A SOLID, GRASSROOTS INFRASTRUCTURE AND A REASONABLY
UNIFIED AND EFFICIENT CENTRAL PARTY ORGANIZATION WITH GREATER
DEPTH. THESE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT
ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE PS. THE GRENOBLE CONGRESS REPRESENTS
NEVERTHELESS A MAJOR STEP IN THAT DIRECTION.

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